

Suggestion System

Everyone benefits from employee's bright ideas

Keep thinking!

And when you come up with an idea that you think might benefit your fellow employees and the company, don't hesitate to send it in to the suggestion system at KIH.

Born in 1944, the system was instituted so that employees would put their ideas to work for themselves as well as for the company.

This gives the employees a chance to express themselves to management. Each and every suggestion is reviewed, evaluated and commented on, in an attempt to let you know that all of your ideas are important. It's an incentive program to promote employee participation and to lend a personal feeling to a large company.

"The suggestion system could, if fully and aggressively utilized, provide the company with broad input from its employees in all areas," comments Chairman of the Board, Bernard M. Fauber.

"In the process, it should shed a good deal of light on areas where improvements could be made as well as providing ways by which the company and employees could profit in methods and procedures, heretofore not considered. Employees, in addition to being paid for suggestions, should feel a more integral part of the operation through the satisfaction gained when their suggestions are implemented."

The suggestion system is headed by Barbara Ritchey, suggestions analyst, with Elizabeth Cox and Carolyn Kulick assisting her in the monumental task of plowing through the 25-100 suggestions they receive daily.

There are a variety of participants, although many of the same people consistently send in suggestions.

"Many of our suggestions come from the warehouses," Mrs. Ritchey says. "We get a lot of suggestions on personnel policies and on displays, operational ideas, security, form changes and training."

No idea is too small or far fetched. And, sometimes, the full potential of an idea may not be recognized until months after it has been instituted. What works out well on paper, many times turns out to be even a better idea when it is put into practice.

One of the most outstanding awards given last year was to Liland Yettaw, K mart 4472, Long Beach, CA.

Liland suggested that K mart

replace the 60- and 70-watt incandescent light bulbs in the stockrooms and equipment areas with 19-watt circular fluorescent fixtures.

Energy experts at headquarters reviewed the suggestion and figured that after a short payback period, an annual savings of \$3.5 million or so could be reached.

"K mart has been on an energy-saving program for three years or more," Liland notes. "I read the label when we got the fluorescent fixtures in to sell. I just thought, 'If these save electricity in people's homes, why wouldn't they work in the stockroom?'"

Liland tried the fixtures in his home and decreased his light bill drastically. He then replaced some bulbs in the K mart stockroom, received a formula to figure the savings from a local power company and calculated that the fluorescent bulbs would save \$3,800 a year for his store.

While Liland's suggestion is intricate and well thought out, many of the award winners use far less complicated methods for arriving at their ideas.

Take Dianna Carole Shumate of K mart 3154, Hampton, VA. She works in the hairgoods department and frequently had problems trying to keep the wigs on their stands when she would style them for a customer.

Her suggestion was to add little

suction cups to the bottom of the wig stands, so that she didn't have to spend all of her time righting a tipped over stand. This would save her time and allow her more time to spend with the customer.

Sound like a simple idea? Maybe so, but it won her an award for saving time and running a more professional operation.

That's what the suggestion system is all about — passing along ideas to make our company run smoother and more efficiently.

"Our K mart suggestion system has been an excellent source of new ideas, methods of improving merchandising and operating efficiency," says Grant Morck, Executive Vice President Store Management.

"Each and every suggestion is studied and reviewed thoroughly. If a suggestion is of a technical nature or involves accounting procedures, it is sent to the experts for analysis before a decision is made as to its merit. Employees suggestions will always be a source of fresh, new ideas."

"We need the benefit of the thinking of the employees who are actually performing the job," continues Mr. Morck. "Last year, we liberalized the amount of our awards in hopes that more employees will benefit by communicating their ideas."

Emil Olson, Senior Buyer in needlework and notions, has been

chairman of the suggestion system committee for the past 10 years.

He and eight other members convene at a monthly meeting to review and award prize money to various suggestors. His idea of a good suggestion is something that will save or make money for the company.

"The best suggestions are two types," Mr. Olson says. "One, to improve the saleability of an item and the other is one that will save the company money and control expenses. I think that the suggestion system is very beneficial to us and also to the employees."

The other members of the committee are: Howard Brubaker, Manager of Decentralized Merchandise Systems; Mary Grant, Associate Buyer, Dietician; Robert Moore, Senior Buyer, men's and boys' furnishings; Frank Shier, store procedures; Allen Weed, Director of Recruitment and Training Management Personnel; Ed Sly, Director of Quality Control; Anthony Stack, Controller of Corporate Taxes and Tom Swoboda, Director of Employee Relations.

Each member is chosen in hopes of representing as many divisions of the company as possible, so as to better evaluate the suggestions.

There are three basic awards: regular, local and coincidental. All winning awards are recognized.

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Barbara Ritchey, suggestion analyst at left and her assistants Elizabeth Cox, center, and Carolyn Kulick, right.